



CORNUCOPIA

SUNSTONE invites short musings: chatty reports, cultural trend sightings, theological meditations. All lovely things of good report, please share them. Send to: <editor@sunstoneonline.com>

'Tis the Season

SIMPLY TO WORSHIP

FOR MOST OF US, THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS A busy time, and we like it that way. We love the earthy drama of it—the lights, the sights, the music, the good smells. We especially enjoy the satisfactions that flow from exchanging our “labors of Love” with each other. We are glad not to be addicted to pricey objects of desire, knowing how little true worth they convey. We Latter-day Saints stay grounded in our connection to Jesus Christ’s birth into the world.

Each year, Christmas is an opportunity to begin Christ’s mission with him all over again. In a sense, we can watch him grow into the work his Father called him to, and we can grow alongside him into our own given work. We can circle back, as it were, to give ourselves a fresh start.

But there is another, more hidden blessing in this holiday. The gift of stillness and silence. A moment of perfect contemplation.

It is Christmas night in the depth of winter. Everything is simple. There is nothing to be done. Christ is born and in his mother’s arms. Were his parents stopped in their tracks in a manger because that was the will of their Father in Heaven? Did he deliberately create this tableau for all time? Whether created by God or storytellers, whether occurring in winter as we celebrate it, or in spring, one can feel the energy of the scene’s slow configuration.

First there is the little family—Mary of Nazareth, Joseph, son of Heli and husband of Mary, and the babe, lying in a manger; then the animals stabled there are drawn to the child; then angelic voices pull the shepherds into the small, calm center. There is a deep sense of waiting and of potential appropriate to this season of hibernation. There is wonder, and also a veiled “unknowing” in regard to this child. How does a Messiah’s life go? No one knows yet, but the fact of his birth is enough for now.

The stars are aligned. The Magi have paused in the east as a star came to rest over the Judean child. There is no need to force the moment to be anything other than it is. Yes it will change. According to its own innate rhythm, winter will move into spring, and likewise the life of this child will also change according to his own inner being and destiny.

But tonight is a holy night. It is the “once upon a time” of our most sacred story about a family. We feel its truth and know that it comes with a price; it will mean a lifetime of faith and work for us.

Tonight, however, we are here to be still. We are part of the tableau; we have come from far and near simply to worship.

The last line of the next to last paragraph, “Mean a lifetime of work for us” seems also to need the word “faith” with work. For me it would add the strength of the oft-quoted

MARYLEE MITCHAM
Golden, Colorado

Margin Notes

REMAKING THE WORLD

“Fear not to do good. . .”
—D&C 6:33

MY DICTIONARY DEFINES FEAR AS: 1) AN unpleasant feeling of apprehension or distress caused by the presence or anticipation of danger, and 2) an idea, thought, or other entity that causes feelings of fear. To me, the most interesting thing about fear is that it does not have its own independent existence. Rather, fear is our reaction to something else. The same objective reality that “causes” fear in us may not in someone else. Fear is the reaction, not the action.

Fearfulness stands in stark contrast to the spirit of God’s call to us in the scriptures. In 2 Nephi 2:25, just after we are told, “men are, that they might have joy,” Lehi notes that as a consequence of the Messiah’s redemption, humans are “free forever, knowing good from evil, to act for themselves and not be acted upon.” To the degree to which we allow outside circumstances and stimuli to dictate our own feelings, moods, and even actions, we are surrendering our ability to act independently. We are agreeing to be acted upon. Too many of us spend too much time waiting for the world to happen around us, and then out of fear or anger or despair (certainly not by conscious choice) find ourselves propelled into action. Eternal progression is not about reacting but about purposely doing good things.

I have a dear friend who says, “I just want to pray, pay, and obey.” Maybe these words resonate somewhere, but I don’t see much sense in them. Surrendering to God and offering up a contrite heart and broken spirit is not at all the same thing as surrendering our God-given agency and innate intelligence in order to pursue an utterly reactive course. I do not believe

Heavenly Tales

FROM THE MAGIC KINGDOM TO THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM

FAMILYSEARCH. WHERE GENERATIONS MEET

Search Results | Download | Pedigree

Ordinance Record

Mickey Mouse
Male

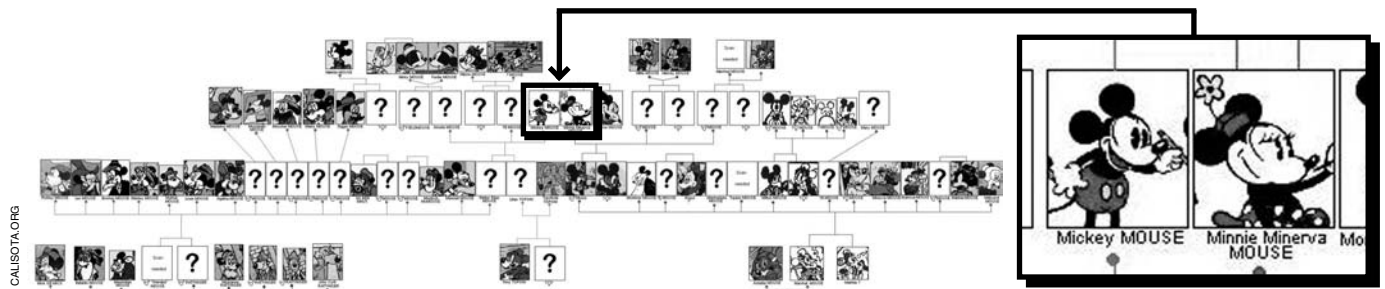
Event(s):
Birth: 01 JAN 1900 Hollywood, Los Angeles, California
Christening:
Death:
Burial:

LDS Ordinances:
B Baptism: CLEARED
E Endowment: CLEARED
P Sealing to Parents: CLEARED
Mighty Mouse / Mama Critter

CAN RODENTS BE TOGETHER FOREVER? MANY ASKED themselves that question when they read in the 15 June edition of the *Salt Lake City Weekly* that the names of Mickey and Minnie Mouse were in the LDS genealogical database. According to a web-page available until recently at familysearch.org, Mickey was born in Hollywood, California, on 1 January 1900. His father was Mighty Mouse, and his mother, Mama Critter. The record, which was submitted in 1991 by a Church member, indicated that Mickey had been cleared for all ordinances, including sealing to his wife Minnie.

While some church members were outraged by the creeping of fictional characters in the Church's database, serious Mickey Mouse fans were further offended by inaccuracies in the record. Mickey was indeed born in Hollywood, but the year was 1928, not 1900. He and Minnie have *not* tied the knot—she's merely his girlfriend. More important, the ordinances cannot be performed because Mickey is not dead—he's as alive as ever.

News of the record raced across the web. A blog entry at genealogue.blogspot.com posted the *Weekly* story, a link to the familysearch.org page, and links to a chart with more than fifty photographs of Mickey's uncles and cousins. Bloggers had a field day visiting the genealogical site, but the excitement was short-lived. By 19 June, reminiscent of his role as the Sorcerer's Apprentice, Mickey Mouse had (poof!) magically disappeared from the database.



Mickey and Minnie's family tree (with detail)

there is anything Orwellian about eternal progression: we do not progress by becoming mindless automatons, by reflexively responding. We are required to surrender our *willfulness* to God, not our *will*.

In I John 4:18, we read that “perfect love casteth out fear.” We all recall that Christ said that in the end, there are only two commandments—the first is to love, and the second is to love. So maybe there is only one commandment in the end: *love*.

The injunction to love is pretty non-specific, pointing more in a general direction than defining specific modes of action for every one of the infinite number of opportunities we have to act. The specific means through which we express love are up to us to understand and demonstrate, each in our own way. I think Christ is pointing the way for a journey of discovery he wants each of us to take that will challenge us to shape our world and circumstances. If we are filled with love, not only do we abandon fear, but we also become less concerned about and

less apt to react to things others try to foist upon us.

The Lord's command, “fear not to do good,” can be understood to mean that we should let nothing stop us from taking that leap of faith into making our own circumstances, to making or remaking the world around us consistent with the noble ends that God desires for all humankind.

TOM JOACHIM
Oakton, Virginia

NOTE: *The purpose of Margin Notes is to invite brief commentaries on passages from scripture or some other religious text. As the title indicates, authors could use their literal margin notes as a springboard toward a discussion of their experience or views on the passage. Margin Notes submissions should begin with a reiteration of the excerpt and should be no more than 500 words long. Please submit reflections to editor Alison Takenaka at: ALISONTAKENAKA@HOTMAIL.COM.*

Ward Stories

VEGETATIVE VALIANCY

DISCLAIMER: *I haven't been able to read the official version of this incident in my file at the Strengthening Church Members Office, so this personal account will have to suffice.*

SOME YEARS AGO, I WAS A NURSERY WORKER IN A West Jordan, Utah, ward. Traditionally, toward the end of the second hour, we would pass out a picture for the children to color (scribble all over). Those children with more artistic flair than others would even use more than one crayon! Parents would come to pick up their offspring and be presented with the scribbles. Most members know that such a moment borders on a religious experience. The child proudly presents the evidence of said intensely creative output (two- and three-year-olds live at only two speeds: full intensity and unconsciousness) and anxiously waits for parental acknowledgment of the priceless offering. And most parents would respond as if a long-lost Rembrandt had been unearthed in the nursery toy box.

One week, our ward librarian slacked off in copying pictures for us to use, so I undertook to produce something for the kiddies to color. My first effort resulted in line drawings of a tomato, a carrot, a bunch of grapes, and an ear of corn. In a move mostly to entertain myself, I appended to the bottom of the paper a paraphrase from an official Church publication: "In the celestial kingdom, we shall partake of fruits and vegetables that are more valiant than other fruits and vegetables" (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 37). The children colored with abandon. In due time, the parents came, received the pictures, effervescently praised the children, and took them home.

The next week I added little smiley faces to drawings of more fruits and vegetables. The apple had two eyes, a nose, and a toothy grin. The grapes also sported jolly expressions. I was trying to show that they were happy being fruits and vegetables. Again I gave into my playful side and added another quotation from one of the Lord's servants: "That vegetables . . . have spirits is clearly shown from the fact that they have capacities for joy and rejoicing" (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 34). At picture time, the nursery leader took one look at my handouts

and wouldn't let me distribute them. The children went home empty-handed that day, and I was released the following Sunday. I've wondered ever since if I'm the only Church member ever released from the nursery over a doctrinal issue.

GREG KOFFORD
Sandy, Utah

A Place for Every TruthTHREATS FROM A
TROUBLED "PROPHET"

EDITOR'S NOTE: *With this issue, SUNSTONE is launching a semi-regular Cornucopia column featuring incidents from the life and ministry of Elder James E. Talmage as compiled by James P. Harris, editor of The Essential James E. Talmage, and who is currently working on a full-length biography of this fascinating Mormon apostle. The column title is taken from a line in Talmage's famous discourse on evolution, "Earth and Man," and is inscribed on the apostle's tombstone: "Within the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is room and place for every truth thus far learned by man or yet to be made known."*

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE'S JOURNAL ENTRY FOR Saturday, 9 June 1923, contains a clipping from the *Salt Lake Telegram* titled, "Death Threat Brings Arrest for Blackmail." The article states that Orlando J. Langford of Tucson, Arizona, was arrested for threats against LDS Church leaders and other prominent persons, including Henry Ford.

Inspector N. J. Salyards investigated Langford at the "insistence of Apostle James E. Talmage and former [Utah] Governor Simon Bamberger[.]" Salyards followed Langford across four states and arrested him at a ranch near Tucson. "Langford was immediately taken before United States Commissioner Edwin Jones and bound over to the federal court on a charge of misuse of the mails in a scheme to defraud." The article states that

President Heber J. Grant, Charles W. Nibley, presiding bishop, and Apostle John A. Widtsoe of the Mormon

IMPROVING "THE SUNSTONE EXPERIENCE"



A READER WHO RECENTLY GOOGLED THE WORD "SUNSTONE" WAS PLEASED to find that SUNSTONE magazine is the first "hit" in Google's ranked list of search results. But the reader did a small double take at what appeared in second place: Sunstone Winery, a 78-acre organic vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley in California.

The logo and font chosen by this winery bear a striking resemblance to ours, and just like us, the winery is always trying to improve "the Sunstone experience," as they call it. But we believe the similarities end there: While six issues of SUNSTONE cost only \$24, six bottles of 2005 rosé, their current promotion, cost a steep \$99. While attending our four-day summer

symposium costs only \$75, a single dinner at Sunstone's Cuvee Cave costs a whopping \$125. The clincher: unlike our name-sake, at our symposiums, we allow students to taste our products for free.

church, Henry Ford and other men of prominence are known to have been among the recipients of Langford's letters demanding payment of sums ranging from \$500 to \$50,000 under threat of harassment by "foul and perditional spirits and the powers of death and hell until you send it." Langford's only known threat of direct personal violence was contained in his latest missive to Dr. Talmage, which was made the basis for Inspector Salyards' investigation and which contained the following: "And if it be necessary I will slay you."

The article goes on to say that Langford's sanity is questioned. In his letters to LDS Church officials, he refers to himself as "The Lord and Thy God." Langford had a disagreement with Talmage regarding the characterization of "The Son of Man" in Talmage's book *Jesus the Christ*. Langford said the title "Son of Man" rightly belonged to him. Langford was also upset because in the only letter Talmage wrote to him, he spelled Langford's first name as "Orlando." Langford insisted his name was spelled "Orlondo," although in letters sent to Talmage and other officials he signed his name "Orlando."

The letters had begun two years prior. When Langford felt his claims were being ignored, he resorted to blackmail and made violent threats. The *Telegram* article continues:

His letters, mailed from points in several western states, began to demand money to financially aid him in the establishment of his claims [that he was deity]. He built up his mailing list to include other "likely" victims outside the Mormon [C]hurch. From President Grant he demanded at first \$500 and when this was ignored he increased the amount to \$2500. From Governor Bamberger he asked \$50,000. Various amounts were demanded from other victims. In each case he instructed that the funds be deposited with the Utah State National Bank under the name of Strong.

Neither in the article nor in the Talmage Journal is any mention made that the name Strong was a reference to the "One Mighty and Strong" described in Doctrine and Covenants Section 85:7.

In his journal that day, Talmage writes simply:

In common with some others of my brethren, and yet others who are not of the Church, I find myself the subject of some undesirable publicity through the arrest yesterday of Orlondo J. Langford at Tucson, Arizona. This poor man is obsessed by the idea that he is a great prophet sent to direct the affairs of the Church in this dispensation; and for several years has been writing letters to myself and others demanding recognition, in very offensive and abusive terms. President Heber J. Grant, Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley, and others have been thus assailed; and during the present year he has coupled with his former demands the payment of sums of money on penalty of dire results for refusal. Of the many accounts appearing in the newspapers one is clipped and incorporated herewith, taken from the *Salt Lake*

Telegram of Saturday, June 9th. I pity the poor fellow, and am entirely devoid of any feeling of resentment respecting him. It was thought best by the First Presidency and the brethren generally to turn over the threatening letters received by President Grant and myself to the federal officials. . . .

Twenty Years Ago in Sunstone

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

Elbert Eugene Peck began his nearly fifteen-year tenure as SUNSTONE editor with "My Burden Is Light," a reflection published in the November 1986 issue, from which the following is excerpted.

I CAUTIOUSLY BEGIN TH[IS] EDITORSHIP. . . BY borrowing a Robert Frost quote that integrates fun with purpose to describe my reasons:

*Only where love and need are one
And the work is play for mortal sakes
Is the deed ever really done
For heaven and the future's sakes.*

Because of the impact SUNSTONE may have on its readers' mortal work for heaven's sake, they deserve to know how the editor views the Church and what his agenda is for the magazine. . . .

Like most SUNSTONE readers, I am acquainted with the disillusionment that comes from discovering that things are not as I was taught and believed; with the despair from realizing that nothing in heaven functions as it ought; and with the cynicism from concluding that things may never change. I have responded with outrage and indifference, apologetics and avoidance, love and hate. I have screamed "a plague on both your houses" upon finding that the "liberal" reformers are polluted by the very vices they decry—malicious gossip, presumptuous judging, blinding pride, arrogant intolerance, and unforgiving memories. I've agonized when the schisms between groups and individuals demanded me to take sides, dividing loves and thoughts when my heart and mind yearned to be one. Lastly, of course, I have frightened in introspective moments upon seeing a spiritual darkness growing in my own soul and wept, remembering my lighthearted days when scriptures were revelations; prayers answered; truths simple and sure; prophets omniscient; and sins forgiven.

In one such moment, I returned home. Home to what I still knew was true: To a mortal yet divine church; to a believing community essential for spiritual growth; and to communion with a loving God. Still, I was not the same person I was before I left the Garden.

I now believe fewer things than I did before, but in what I believe, I am more certain. . . . If I'm tentative about dogma, I'm passionate about establishing Zion: which cause combines all my diverse attributes into one; which cause draws me to Sunstone in search of intellectual and spiritual understanding and also for community.



The Sugar Beet

“All the Mormon News That’s Fit to Print”

The Mormon Tabernacle Enquirer, the Sugar Beet’s first collection, has received rave reviews from Publisher’s Weekly and the University of Utah’s Daily Chronicle. Park City TV even did a feature on it. Its tasteful, bright orange hues go perfectly with your home decor. Buy it now at ZARAHMLABOOKS.COM.

NEW CATEGORIES ADDED TO TESTIMONY SAFARI GAME

By Sean McKissick

Fans of Young, Kimball, Pratt, and McConkie’s (a division of Hasbro) church meeting survival series are excited by the latest update to *Testimony Safari*. The new categories are:

- Juicy confession of past sins (15 points)
- Juicier confession of past sins of other members of the congregation (30 points)
- Bishop shares his testimony of marriage (10 points)
- Your girlfriend shares her testimony of marriage (20 points)
- “I recently had the opportunity to . . .” (5 points)
- “I felt inspired to . . .” (10 points)
- “I brought my gun in order to . . .” (30 points)
- Testimony runs too long; bishop tells you to stop (20 points)
- Testimony runs too long; angelic host with flaming swords descends and tells you to stop (75 points)
- “Booger” (50 points)

Happy Valley Digest

FROM THE UTAH VALLEY LEAGUE OF APPALLED CITIZENS NEWSLETTER

Dear Editor,

I’d just like to send out a great big thank you to all those who worked so hard to make this last election such a success. I know that many hours were put into getting the ballots ready and staffing the voting areas.

When I came in to vote, I had just finished a really hectic day. So when I entered the booth to find that some good-hearted soul had already punched the straight Republican vote selection on my ballot, I heaved a big sigh of relief and just turned it in. What a time saver!

As I left the voting area, I saw that the other ballots had been similarly improved.

I know the people who gave so much of their time are too

humble to come forward and claim credit for their deeds. But let me say it anyway. Thank you!

ALYSSA MAY
Spanish Fork

FROM THE PLANET NEAREST UNTO KOKAUBEAM WARD NEWSLETTER

Dear “Brother Ha Ha” (you know who you are),

You are not funny. I told a free agency joke last sacrament meeting that went, “I’m supposed to give my talk on free agency, but I decided to use my free agency and not give my talk.” Now *that* was funny. But you—you are not funny. Please study the humor section of *The New Era* and the movie, *The Home Teachers*. Those are very funny. Hopefully you can learn something from them.

BROTHER BUTLER
Ward Activities Committee

Views from the Street

“Whom are you planning to vote for?”



I’m going to vote for that white guy with a titanic ego and all the money. What’s his name, again?



I don’t know, are there any former professional wrestlers, body builders, or Ku Klux Klan members running?



I’m basing my vote on the swimsuit event.



I’m not sure yet. I’m still trying to decipher the Nephite engravings given to me by the resurrected John F. Kennedy.



Doesn’t matter. The Whore of Babylon is knocking down the gates even as we speak. All that stands between us and her are GUNS, GUNS, GUNS!



What? We have to vote someone else off the island?